

representative, to work upon a committee appointed by Lord Morpeth to examine and to report upon the emendations necessary in the present absurd and obnoxious Metropolitan Buildings Bill. From October to February last the committee met at least once a week, and gave to the subject the most persevering attention for six or seven hours at each meeting. In February last a report of the committee was sent to Lord Morpeth, but from that time to this not a word of communication had been forwarded to any one of the committee either by or on behalf of his lordship.* The Chairman continued:—Whatever might be the interests of individuals under the present regulations, he would assure the society that the committee had not been deterred from proposing any amendment, or any regulation, or any improvement that was deemed necessary or desirable for public improvement, or that might relieve the public in general from the operation of the many absurd and obnoxious regulations in the present bill. At the commencement of the labours of the committee, it was agreed that until after the report of the committee had been sent to Lord Morpeth, the committee was not to report to their respective constituencies, and he (the Chairman) had since understood that it was still the wish of Lord Morpeth that for the present the recommendations of the committee should be prevented from being laid before the public. This being so, he was prevented laying before the society a detailed statement of the proceedings of the committee, but without committing any thing like a breach of confidence, he thought he was justified in saying that the whole, or very nearly the whole, of the amendments proposed by the society of master carpenters had met with the approval of, and were supported and recommended by, the committee. In establishing the recommendations and improvements, he was greatly indebted to Mr. Piper, also on the committee, the able honorary secretary of the Builders' Society, whose views met the views of this society so exactly and so completely, that it would almost appear that there was but one society represented by two persons. In conclusion, it will appear that about 79 of the clauses in the present bill are altered, amended, or expunged; that the schedules are also altered most materially, and a large proportion are recommended to be entirely removed. Having stated this much, he was sorry that he could not give the information as to when the recommendation of the committee would either be adopted or taken into consideration; at all events, he thought that Parliament would not be troubled this session with any improved bill; but still the society ought not to lose sight of, and ought not passively to put up with, the buildings regulations, but from time to time energetically and unceasingly impress upon the members of the Legislature, that the present bill is obnoxious, unjust, and ambiguous, and ought to be displaced by a much more simple and reasonable enactment.

SOME ARCHITECTS' PRACTICES.

SIR,—Before you can induce any uniformity or consistency in the charges of architects to their clients, you must persuade them all to forego their "commission at the other end." At present very many in the profession always expect, and very often receive, either a direct per centage, or an indirect "consideration," from the parties whom they recommend, or who work under them. and, although I allow there are many honourable exceptions, these are more rare than you perhaps imagine. Some, indeed, there are who are far too respectable to touch gold, or a cheque, even if offered—but then they do not expect to be charged for any work done at their own houses, or, if charged, never think of paying the bill.

I do not make this charge at random, but from certain knowledge and costly experience. I hand my card as a guarantee of good faith, but I cannot afford to have my name published in connection with the subject.

* Some time since, we forwarded to Lord Morpeth a request to be permitted to publish the report; but his lordship considered it was not desirable that the same should be made public at present.—E.O.

Of course the practice is baneful to all parties concerned, and not least to the upright and fair-dealing architect.

A TRADESMAN.

SIR,—As some of your non-professional readers may not be acquainted with the manner in which cheap building is now managed, I wish to enlighten them a little on that subject, by illustrating a case. We will suppose A to be a person of moderate fortune, who has at different periods erected a few cottages on his estate, for which he has employed B, a respectable builder in his own neighbourhood, who has hitherto given him entire satisfaction, but being about to erect a residence for himself, he of course calls on an architect C, who finding it an eligible situation for display, makes a very elaborate design, with which A is very much pleased. B is then applied to for an estimate, and being well acquainted with the locality and the expense of getting materials to the site, makes a very careful calculation, allowing himself a fair remuneration: but his estimate far exceeding the sum stated by the architect, A, at C's suggestion, advertises for tenders, and a lot of half-inch contractors, men without either money or character to lose, come forward, and the result is that a tender, 25 to 50 per cent. lower than B's is accepted; the works are proceeded with immediately; a few extras of course are found by the builder, for which he is paid. A then furnishes his house, and by the time he has got completely located therein, he begins to find rather alarming symptoms of going to pieces; floors gape, ceilings crack, and various other signs of slippery work and unseasoned materials begin to show themselves, and A in great distress sends for the builder, but he is not forthcoming, for having taken the work at a price less than the actual cost, he cannot (and never intended to) pay his creditors, and is undergoing the process of whitewashing in the court of Bankruptcy. A, being an honourable man, has then to endure the punishment of living in a house that is a continual eye-sore to him, and which he has the additional mortification of feeling is partly erected at the expense of the timber merchant, stone merchant, and brickmaker.

JACK-PLANE.

.* We have received a long statement respecting certain tenders for repairs at the Russell Institution, but cannot insert it without inquiry.

RAILWAY JOTTINGS.

THE calls due in July amount to nearly 4,000,000*l.*, or about 1,500,000*l.* more than those of June, and greater than any this year, except in January, which was nearly 5,000,000*l.* Compared with July, 1847, there is a decrease of nearly 1,500,000*l.* The total amount of calls to end of July is 22,437,931*l.*, against 27,394,220*l.* in 1847, being a decrease of 4,956,290*l.*—A railway velocipede, for official visits of inspection, has been tried on the Lincoln and Nottingham line. It is so light that four persons might lift it out of the way on the approach of a train. To put it in motion, two men, who stand upon it, turn a wheel round which a strap passes; the strap also passing round a small wheel in the middle of one of the axles. Without any great expenditure of strength, a speed of 20 miles an hour can be kept up. This, however, is by no means a new machine, although it is so called. We have seen it at work on one of the Scottish lines some years since, under the direction of Mr. Errington, C.E.—"Mr. A. C. Tarry," says the *Gateshead Observer*, "writing from Lucca to his friend in England, on the 31st ultimo, says:—'it gives me much pleasure to inform you that, during the war here, we have been much indebted to the manufacturers of England for locomotive engines, the transit of so many soldiers requiring their constant use night and day, and the Yankee engines we have here requiring continued repairs. Since I came here, an engine, made by Messrs. Sharpe, Brothers, of Manchester, has run the unprecedented number of 81,000 miles, without requiring a sixpence of expense in that way, with the exception of furnace bars, which were speedily rendered useless, from the soft-

ness of the material used in their construction." Our locomotive-builders are cleverer fellows than our shipbuilders, if your Hudsons and your Bentincks are to be believed. Notwithstanding the high wages which our Stephensons and our Hawthorns, our Sharpes and our Longridges, pay to their workmen, they can find customers for their engines in countries where wages are low. Is it to some statute akin to the Act of Navigation that their superiority is owing? or are they indebted to their own skill, and energy, and enterprise?"—The falling of so many railway bridges, and the burning of that at Newport, involves a question as to which is really the best mode of construction. It cannot be claimed for us, as a nation, says the *Mining Journal*, that our engineers adopt, in every case, plans founded on the truest mechanical bases; but, in numerous cases, we have seen enormous structures, and immense iron girder bridges, absolutely crushed into ruins by their own unwieldy weight; while lighter structures, but possessing large mechanical power, have been entirely passed over. Among the many descriptions of bridges which we have had occasion to notice, we know of few which combine the elements of safety with lightness and economy such as that under Ryder's patent, though of American origin. The model, which we some time since inspected, 4 feet 6 inches long, weighing 12 lbs., has supported shot, in bags, weighing 1,500 lbs.; one, 40 feet span, weighing 4½ tons, has borne, we are informed, 50 tons; and a bridge, with a double track, on the New York and Harlem line, weighing 13 tons, has heavy trains passing over it every day, without sensible oscillation or vibration; to test the methods employed of allowing for expansion and contraction, the two last named ones have been exposed to temperatures varying from 110 degrees to several degrees below zero.—The following is a description of the bridge over the Tweed: it is to be of stone, and is to consist of 28 semicircular arches, each 6½ feet span, resting on lofty piers, carrying the level of the railway 103 feet above high-water mark, 126 feet above low-water mark, and 135 feet above the deepest part of the bed of the river. The whole length of the bridge, with abutments and wing-walls, is 2,140 feet. The 28 arches are divided into two series by a broad pier, 28 feet in thickness in the middle. The piers of the arches are 8½ feet in thickness at the springing, increasing by steps towards the bottom. The work will not be completed for 16 or 18 months, but a temporary bridge will shortly be ready for traffic.—The viaduct over the valley of Dunglass, between Dunbar and Berwick, not far from the once celebrated Pease-bridge, crosses the valley and banks by six semicircular arches, each 60 feet span, and then the deep ravine by a single arch, 135 feet span, and rising 105 feet above the bed of the stream.—The Ballochmyle viaduct, across the water of Ayr, on the Cumnock extension of the Ayrshire railway, is similar to that of Dunglass in crossing the valley on three semicircular arches, each 50 feet span on each side, but crosses the deep ravine in the middle by a single semicircular arch, 180 feet span, and rising 150 feet above the bed of the stream. The adjacent rocks furnished vast blocks of stone, greatly facilitating the construction. The arch stones are 5 feet 3 inches deep at the springing, and 4 feet 9 inches at the crown.—On the Blackburn and Accrington portion of the East Lancashire Line, just opened, there are several viaducts. In passing from Blackburn a tunnel and cutting are first met with, and the line soon reaches its apex on a gradient of 1 in 140 at Rishton Moor, near which is the first viaduct, crossing a canal, and formed of heavy timber on four stone piers, "the wood-work," it is said, "being knitted together in a peculiar manner, securing very great power." At Rishton, also, the reservoir is crossed by a viaduct 240 feet long and 30 feet wide, constructed of timber "strongly knitted together by iron plates and bolts." The roadway over the reservoir rests on nineteen bearings, the crossheads of which are at a height of 45 feet from the iron points of the beams, of which there are six to each bearing. The piles are 10 feet above the water, 20 feet in it, and 15 in the earth. The line again reaches and crosses the canal in Church parish, where a viaduct